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**Testimony in Support of House Bill 4478
House Criminal Justice Committee
May 19, 2015**

Chairman Heise and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

The Student Animal Legal Defense Fund at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School is a student chapter of the national non-profit, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, an organization that works to protect and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. The Animal Legal Defense Fund has over 100,000 members and 200 law student chapters worldwide.

The Student Animal Legal Defense Fund at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School supports HB 4478, which will protect victims of domestic violence – and their pets – by including animals in personal protection orders.

The connection between domestic violence and animal abuse is widespread and well-documented. A growing body of research suggests that animal abuse in domestic violence situations occurs frequently as a means of gaining control over a victim with an emotional attachment to a pet (American Bar Association, 2007). Fear of leaving a pet behind is frequently cited as a reason many victims of domestic violence do not leave, or delay leaving abusive situations; 71% of victims surveyed in women's shelters reported that their abuser killed, harmed, or threatened to kill or harm their family pets (Ascione, Weber & Wood, 2007). Additionally, several independent studies have confirmed that 18% to 48% of abused women have delayed leaving or returned to an abusive partner out of fear for a pet that was left behind (Ascione, 2007).

In order to decrease instances of domestic violence, it is necessary to provide victims with a safe option for their pets. Including pets in personal protection orders would act as a safeguard for both pets and domestic abuse victims, and decrease the potential for abuse and violence. It is for these reasons that the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School respectfully asks the House Criminal Justice Committee to support HB 4478.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Alicia Prygoski, President
Student Animal Legal Defense Fund at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School

House Committee on Criminal Justice
Michigan Legislature

May 15, 2015



RE: ALDF Supports HB 4487

Dear Chairman Heise, Vice Chairman Webber, Vice Chairwoman Guerra, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Chris Green, and I am the Director of Legislative Affairs for the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF), a national organization of attorneys working to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. I also am Chair of the American Bar Association's Animal Law Committee.

ALDF enjoys a nationwide membership of over 200,000 members and supporters, many of whom reside in the State of Michigan. It is on their behalf that I respectfully write to wholeheartedly support HB 4478, which would allow courts to include pets in personal protection orders and enjoin a person from harming an animal in a domestic violence situation. The purpose of this vital measure is to protect both petitioners and their pets from harm or threats of harm by their domestic partners.

In addition to the obvious societal benefit of curbing harm to helpless animals, volumes of scientific evidence has verified a direct relationship between the criminal abuse of animals and subsequent violence against women, children, and the elderly. For this reason, animal abuse is one of the four primary indicators F.B.I. profilers use to assess future violent behavior. Indeed, one 20-year study confirmed that convicted animal abusers are five times more likely to be arrested for committing violent crimes against humans. Another analysis found that in homes where children were physically abused, 88 percent of the time the family dog or cat also had been harmed. And women abused by their domestic partners are 10 times more likely to report that their partner also hurt or killed one of their beloved pets.

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Furthermore, 18% to 48% of domestic violence victims delay or refuse to leave their abusive situations because they fear their abusers will harm or kill their pets if they leave. Abusers often use animal abuse to control, intimidate, and retaliate against their victims. Given this profound correlation of criminal conduct, including pets in personal protection orders would provide additional protection for domestic violence victims, their children, and their pets from abuse at the hands of their domestic partners.

On behalf of my organization's nearly 2,000 Michigan members who feel passionately about this issue, I ask that you seriously consider the crucial need for this essential measure and vote to pass HB 4478.

Sincerely,

Christopher Green
Director of Legislative Affairs
Animal Legal Defense Fund

Winning the case against cruelty

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